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A Handbook of English Composition. By JAMES MORGAN HART, Professor of Rhetoric and English Philology in Cornell University. Philadelphia: Eldredge & Brother, 1895; pp. iv. + 360.

PROFESSOR HART entitles his book *A Handbook of English Composition*, a phrase which fails to indicate the scope of a work that includes chapters on the history of the English language, on the nature and types of poetry, and on meter. The author asserts that "he has consistently refrained from touching upon the theory of Rhetoric," a remark that the reader must take in a somewhat elastic sense: the method is far more analytical than that of several recent manuals that might be named. The book is nevertheless the outcome of long personal experience in the class room. Especially in the third part, which with two chapters on the paragraph is recommended by the author as a starting point for study, the volume abounds in shrewd practical suggestions. Almost every word of the chapter on preparing a composition is the very gospel of the art of teaching.

It has been the author's endeavor to make the book "available both for school and college." Whether any one volume ought to attempt so much is an open question. But there seems to be little room for doubt that in both the fields for which it is designed results of a high practical sort can be secured by the use of Professor Hart's manual. It seems equally clear that beginners ought to study the work in the order of presentation suggested in the preface; and that the chapter on argumentation, if used in the secondary school, will need simplification and explanation on the part of the instructor.

The main topics of the work are four: invention, expression, practical features of composition, and a group of miscellaneous subjects (meter, etc.). Invention comes first, and for this order, new in so ambitious a compendium, much is to be said. The paragraph is the first sub-topic. Then follows the theory of the types of composition: narration, description, exposition, and argument. The general subject of expression is approached through the qualities of style, clearness, force, propriety, and includes a chapter on figurative expression. Many teachers will regret that here the general principles of composition — as unity and coherence — are abandoned; whereas they were recognized in the chapters on the paragraph and on narration. The treatment of propriety is negative; for college men something more than prohibitions is

necessary; some positive treatment of the æsthetic qualities of style is desirable. What the author could here have given us may be inferred from his admirable section on euphony. To the third general division of the book—practical features—reference has already been made. It is in every way helpful. Its chapter on reading and composition has a suggestive discussion of the relation of theme writing to the study of master-pieces. To the fourth division, along with poetry and meter, are assigned oratory and debate, for no discoverable reason except that pulpit oratory of today is declared to belong rather to the epideictic type than to the argumentative.

Reverting to the first part, we find an excellent treatment of paragraph construction. For framing the outline the beginner has already received in part third directions that are beyond praise. Now the writer insists that the theme of each isolated paragraph should itself be the subject of analysis on the part of the student before he writes. One or two new terms of nomenclature appear. "Echo" is picturesque as applied to coherence between the closing idea of one sentence or section and the opening idea of the next. It is, however, hardly more descriptive of this coherence than of what Professor Hart elsewhere calls "Repeated Structure." "Paragraph Center" is distinctly applicable when no summary of a paragraph is possible but some "one object, one feature, one movement is made the center of interest."

In discussing the types of composition the author shows familiarity with recent works on this subject. Indeed from a reference (p. 114) to "Baker: *Argumentation*," one might forget that Professor Hart's book appeared before Professor G. P. Baker's *Principles of Argumentation*, in which the passage quoted does occur (p. 48). The reference is to Professor Baker's *Specimens of Argumentation: Modern*. Argumentation is surveyed by Professor Hart with an elaboration of theory which contrasts too sharply with the simpler, even empirical treatment of force, later on. His explanation of proofs and syllogistic methods is clear and good. The nomenclature in terms of inference from general to particular and *vice versa*, is helpful; but we unwillingly infer that the author would discard the terms sign and example, two terms which since the days of the Stagirite have lent their concreteness to the elucidation of a difficult matter. The important subject of the Issue, which is the paramount question in debate, is not mentioned. Its place is inadequately taken by a paragraph on the importance of defining terms. On page 111 a bright boy might find a slight flaw in the rea-

soning: "Every lightning rod is a verification of Franklin's deduction" (that "electricity and lightning are identical"). The phrase of Genung, Dynamic Description—massing details according to their power of producing a given general impression—is used by Hart to mean "turning the description into narration." The change is a good one, except that such changes are in themselves undesirable.

The difficulties of treating the general subject of expression under the head of three qualities of style have been referred to above. The case is made worse in the present work by the utter absence of a definition of force. Under this head we have a much needed warning against the abuse of conjunctions, especially *and*; but why under force rather than clearness? Here too is set unity of the sentence, a matter which affects intelligibility as much as the emotional quality of force. Under force is likewise included the theory of periodic and loose sentences.

Periodicity, by the way, is defined in terms not of syntax but of emphasis, a confusing innovation. The loose sentence is defined in practically the accepted way, as one which ends in a modifying clause. Unity in the sentence is explained in terms of grammar, whereas a sentence may be grammatically integral and logically heterogeneous. Later (p. 154) we get a second and better definition, but still vague: "By Unity is meant such an arrangement of the parts of the sentence that they form *one organized whole*, and make upon the mind *one homogeneous* impression."

The third part closes with chapters on propriety and figurative expression. On the first topic the author writes with wholesome good sense and full knowledge. He is far from being a purist, although curiously he objects to *engineer* for the driver of a locomotive. He finds no valid objection to the moderate use of the cleft infinitive. He avoids the metaphysics of *shall* and *will*; even the ethics of these words (in interrogative constructions) he leaves rather needlessly in the lurch. The terms barbarism and impropriety do not occur in the discussion. Coming to the subject of figures the author attempts no classification other than the time-honored formulas. Allegory is said to be "not a form of expression, but a form of literature," a remark which thus unqualified turns a useful distinction into a false one. The futile discrimination is made that it is not simile but real comparison to say of a person, He sings like a nightingale, "for both men and birds belong to the class of singing animals." The actual contribution of metaphor

to clearness seems unduly disparaged. Without radical metaphor—in the Müller sense—language would be impossible; and without the poetic metaphor of common life intelligibility would be out of the question. It may fairly be doubted whether “Metaphor in distinction from simile, is a figure of force, not directly of clearness.”

Professor Hart has constantly tried to make his book “*interesting and stimulating*.” His choice of literary illustrations has done much to secure the desired end. A purely literary treatment would have added an element of interest not now present. The author’s own style is terse and perfectly clear. If it rarely charms by grace or inevitable felicity it is never tedious, and it sets no models of eccentricity. Probably with deliberation Professor Hart uses the cleft infinitive (pp. 29, 251, 315, *et al.*). In this he goes beyond Dr. Hall himself, who preaches cleft infinitive but to the discomfiture of logic and the comfort of most readers does not practice it. Deliberate, too, is probably the use of *the above* as an adjective (p. 29 *et al.*), a concession to commercial English. It is not clear whether the author would defend his use of *quite long* (p. 37); of *replaced* in “replaced them with foreign words” (p. 27); of *actions* in “reveal his character in his *actions*” (p. 69); of *evidenced* (p. 99). There are a few trifling slips in coherence: (p. 116), “Were the present condition and the previous condition identical (which they never are)”; (p. 347) “There is a city of Trenton in N. Y. and N. J.” On page 47, fourth line, the sense requires an *of* before *Gibbon’s*. On page 97 we have the victim of Webster’s eloquence called Goodridge, while he reappears on page 108 as Goodrich. Having jotted down these running comments, some of them perhaps hypercritical, let me confess having done scant justice to the practical side of the work. But then, the bookseller *soll nicht vorgegriffen werden*. Every teacher ought to own the book.

E. H. LEWIS

History of the United States, for Schools. By JOHN FISKE. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1894.

THE author and publisher intended this work to present some advantages over other works of its class. In some respects they have succeeded. The work is larger than the average school text—about 500 pages—and is very abundantly supplied with maps, portraits, and views of historic objects, over 200 in all. After each chapter is found a list of “Topics and Questions” which are intended to serve as an